

**Testimony for the Appropriations Committee**  
**From a Mother / Parent Educator at Brennan-Rogers Magnet School Family Resource**  
**Center / Founder of Community Organization "Moms United in East Haven/Mamas Unidas**  
**en East Haven"**  
**Lorena Venegas**  
**February 21, 2017**

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Lorena Venegas and I am here as the mother of twin girls that are with me today, as well as all the mothers I represent in my home town of East Haven and my work town of New Haven. My children and I have participated in the Family Resource Center program since they [children] were 9 months old, now age 6. My goal is to strongly support the continued presence, to preserve the current funding amount, and to preserve the current funding structure for all Family Resource Centers throughout the State of Connecticut.

As a mother, my primary goal is to take care of my children's needs so that they can feel loved, be confident individuals, and cultivate the love of learning to gain skills that will make them successful in life. Actively participating in FRC events gave me the confidence as a parent and the knowledge base to learn about child development from certified, trained staff. Attending community workshops such as the "Circle of Security" helped me to understand and highlight the importance of nurturing my children to have a better mother-daughter relationship. Investing time to participate in home visitations, gave me insight into how my children were reaching developmental milestones with at-home activities to encourage my children to reach for the next level. These discussions did not stop in the home, but instead led to discussions about concerns with pediatricians and specialists.

The FRC focus on early literacy, learning through play, and social-emotional connections through parenting groups has made our family better. As a mother, I am my children's advocate. The FRC gave me the tools to become empowered to look for better opportunities for learning for my children, help families in my community, become vocal in local Board of Education meetings, and be an advocate for early literacy by becoming a Trustee at my local public library.

With knowledge comes responsibility and for nearly three years, I have served my community in East Haven and New Haven as a certified Parent Educator in a Family Resource Center using the Parents as Teachers national curriculum. I am passionate about connecting mothers, fathers, grandparents that are becoming parents to their grandchildren, caregivers, and home day care providers to community resources, to provide parenting education to meet their child's needs. The West Rock neighborhood in New Haven has high needs with families trying to access food, diapers, books, employment, adult education, medical services and transportation. The Brennan-Rogers FRC serves as the compassionate, empathetic, encouraging link that provides a web to connect resources, with unique family programming and tutoring programs in reading and math. I have worked with families that were apprehensive about making the call to Birth-to-Three for services. I have worked with families where children are in broken homes due to incarceration, drug addiction, underemployment. The one thing in common: all participating families want to build safe, nurturing environments for their children to thrive. Our State of Connecticut has the responsibility to continue the original legislative commitment. During your discussion, please think of me, my children and the families that I represent that believe in setting our children up for success!

Thank You